Perinatal Loss

How the Nurse Provides Care & Support

Mary Katherine

- Died June 7, 2002, in her mother's womb.

Michael & Matthew

- Twin Brothers…
Perinatal Loss

- Expectations in Pregnancy
- Society ALWAYS anticipates a happy outcome
- Nursing role in a crisis
- The greatest ministry

The situational life crisis

- Infertility
- Premature labor/delivery
- Caesarean birth
- Loss of control
- Anticipated child
- Death of fetus, infant, mother

ALL are losses of what was dreamed & planned

Nursing Care...

- Based on knowledge of death/dying, grief/grieving, the experience of loss
- Sensitivity
- Support
- Therapeutic
- Empathy, warmth, and genuineness
It was for the best….

- You can have another one…
- God has a plan…

Grieving Process

- Parental Response (Kubler-Ross)
  - Denial
  - Anger
  - Bargaining
  - Depression
  - Acceptance

Comparing theories...

- Miles (Wong, p.679)
- Acute Distress – Shock & Numbness, unreality and confusion (2 weeks)
- Intense Grief – emotions – loneliness, guilt (5-9 months)
- Reorganization – find perspective; better functioning (18-24 months)
Nursing Care

- Understand normal phases, assess patient
- Plan to support parents/family
- Therapeutic interventions
- Recognize abnormals, manage carefully

Pathological/Complicated Grief

- Incongruent grieving –
  women grieve differently from men and in the case of pregnancy, usually grieve more than men
- Pathologic –
  severe psychiatric symptoms at any time during the grieving process.
  prolonged, doesn’t let go, adjust

What is “Presence”?

Presence means:
be near, but don’t hover
DON’T JUST DO SOMETHING! STAND THERE!!
don’t fill silence with talk
don’t give answers to questions that have no answers
don’t assume what you should do – ask!
Individual Differences

- Ages – Children – “The Littlest Mourner”; see handouts
  Teens – greater risk for loss and greater risk for needing to work through the grief process.
  Older – “last chance”
- Cultural
- Single Mom
- Multiple gestation

Anticipatory Guidance & Nursing Interventions

- Acknowledge the parents’ shock and grief
- Sharpen the reality of the baby’s death/demise
- Assist with grieving
- Help parents prepare themselves for telling others
- Involve family and support persons in discharge plans.

“I Had a Baby Sister…”

But she only lasted one day.

Notice in story: anticipatory guidance, anticipatory grief, bits of information vs. overwhelming family, how child was prepared, how death was managed, what family felt afterwards.
What About Maternal Death?

- 6.5/100,000 live births
- Critical care very scary for family. Confusing... “this isn’t the way it’s supposed to be!”
- Dad carries the brunt of everything

“At a Loss for Words”

- What is the most commonly mentioned feeling/emotion that parents relate?
- What nursing intervention sticks out at the most therapeutic for parents?
- What did parents relate as being inappropriate?